

Confirmation Program

From the Offices of Catechesis and Evangelization and Youth Ministry

It is with great excitement that we are making available to any parish in the Diocese of La Crosse a program that prepares teens for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This program consists of 33 teachings that cover the basics of the Faith, presented in a much different way from the basics taught to young children. Many teens are encountering the fundamental questions about life for the first time (Who is God? What does He want? Who am I? How should I respond to Him?). It is crucial that we help them find the answers to these questions as we present the most important Truths of the Faith to them in ever-deeper and more creative ways.

We hope that these sessions will be beneficial to the degree that you need them. Some of you have expressed interest in completely changing your program because the age of receiving the Sacrament has been lowered. Others are looking to change two or three sessions. Please feel free to use what you need to fit your parish circumstances and the students you are teaching.

The choice and organization of the sessions are based upon paragraph #1697 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the section on Life in Christ. The paragraph lists what should be included to lead a Christian to live according to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit.

What is included in this Confirmation Program *(For shortened version, read underlined items.)*

The **texts** for the Confirmation program are **Sacred Scripture and the Catechism**. In each session, the young people receive one to three handouts that are kept in their personal binder. The handouts contain the essence of the teaching. The major points of the outline are filled in as the students are engaged with questions that they can answer themselves, which they discover in the Catechism or Bible and/or the teacher explains the answer. Most weeks, there are two Catechism citations and two Scriptures that the students look up to find answers and these have been specifically noted. The paragraphs in the Catechism and Scripture have been carefully chosen, keeping the students age in mind to make sure they are texts that the young people will be able to read and understand.

The program contains the **teacher's copy for each session**. The handouts are identical to the student's handouts. However, the words that are underlined on the teacher's copy are to be filled in on the student's copy. Catechism citations are listed for each point in order for the teacher to come prepared with an overall understanding of the material.

Included in the program is a **daily prayer commitment**. The students are given a half sheet of paper with a Scripture listed for each day. Students begin with the Gospel of Luke and read several verses each day, the focus being on one or two events or teaching by Jesus. During the Christmas season, the prayer commitment is the Gospel for the day. In mid January, the Gospel of Matthew is begun and prayerfully read until after Easter when the students read the Acts of the Apostles. If a few minutes are taken each week to address (in a very simple way) what the young people are reading in their prayer commitment, those students who are slow to begin, will be drawn to a desire to begin reading the words of Jesus Christ. When young people realize that God does speak to us through His Word in the Bible, they quickly develop a habit of setting aside 15 minutes a day to prayerfully receive His guidance, direction and consolation.

The Confirmation program begins with a one-day retreat. (A two day retreat is also included.) The one-day retreat focuses on an overview of the entire year. The day begins with the Story of God's Family using artwork that can be downloaded off the Diocesan Web site under Ministries/Catechesis and Evangelization. The weekly, evening sessions then explain, in greater detail, **each major teaching of Salvation History**: We believe in One God, How do we know about God and what He wants – Divine Revelation, the Blessed Trinity, Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve. At this point the students begin an **eight-week Bible Study** that includes filling out a **Bible Timeline** from Adam to Jesus. The timeline is from the Great Adventure by Jeff Cavins. Each night of the eight weeks, students hear a simple teaching on a Bible figure such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David etc. The teaching includes reading the story from Scripture, filling in a handout, watching a ten minute video clip on the Scripture and answering personal questions on what this Scripture story has to do with my life. This overview of the Old Testament truly helps the students to understand the Big Picture of God's Plan of Salvation History and therefore to be more attuned to the Scripture readings at Sunday Mass.

The second half of the Confirmation program is the direct preparation for reception of the Sacrament. A teaching on Jesus Christ and the Beatitudes provide an understanding of what it means to follow Christ and how it differs from the world-view. The students then see the need for the Sacraments and the Gifts that are received in Baptism. One night is spent on each of the **Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity**. A very brief introduction is given to a teen issue or problem such as peer pressure, drinking, swearing, parental disrespect etc. After presenting the definition and teaching of the Gift, the students see, for example, how the supernatural Gift of Faith is the answer to the problem of peer pressure. The **Holy Spirit and Pentecost** are studied during the fourth session followed by a night on each of the **seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit**. To better understand the Theological Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, **video clips of saints**, such as St Patrick, St. Joan of Arc, St. Maximillian Kolbe, are shown in order to see the saint living out the Gift in a particular circumstance. The video clips are timed out so that the teacher knows where to begin and end.

Throughout the year, the students are always being helped to better understand the Sacrament of Confirmation: to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are assisted in this mission through the coming of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, Who strengthens the supernatural Gifts received in Baptism, so that we can be faithful in daily prayer, living according to the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes and be true witnesses to Christ.

All the sessions of this program are based on the **five-step teaching process**, of which the fourth step is the **application of the teaching to one's own life**. If you have questions on the five step teaching process or any other aspect of this program, please call (608)791-2658 or e-mail Ann Lankford at alankford@dioceseoflacrosse.com. A schedule that lays out the 33 sessions, teen activity books and a resource list that includes *teen-engaging* Christian music are available by e-mail upon request. The entire program is on four discs. We are asking for a \$10 donation to cover costs and to help support the work of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization and Youth Ministry.

Let us continue to keep the confirmands of our Diocese in our prayers as they prepare to become strong and courageous disciples for Jesus Christ!